

EXODUS 17:1-7----- IS THE LORD WITH US?

We continue with the journey in the desert. The Israelites have been given water when it didn't seem like they were going to get any. They have been fed manna from heaven when it looked like they were going to starve. God tested them, but always provided for them when they needed it. On both tests, their complaining exposed their hearts. They are people of unbelief, as they will continue to prove that throughout their journey in the wilderness. They just don't trust the Lord when they need to the most. His presence alone should have been enough. Then of course, all His works have been seen over and over, yet they still don't trust Him. Today our text reveals the third rebellion of the Israelites as they complain about the lack of water again. They don't see that he has their best interests in mind. They don't even think He is with them.

God directs Israel into difficult situations in order to prove His power and build their faith and character. That is what He does to each one of us. God desires that we grow in our faith and knowledge of God. God is wanting us to develop godly character so He gives us tests. These are meant to strengthen us. Trust and obedience are the key ingredients to the journey in the desert and the answer to, Is the Lord with us?

1. AN OLD TEST REPEATED

17:1-3

A. THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

Obeying the command of the Lord—The Lord is leading

The incident started off well with the people following the Lord's command and moving from place to place. They were being led by God and they were on their way. They obey here, but are they ready for a test?

Rephidim—Apparently this was in the vicinity of Mt Sinai. They probably thought they were going to find water there.

No water---They were forced to depend upon God again but they complained instead. When adversity came they did not develop a spirit of faith. They had failed this test once before. You would think that they would remember that He provided water before.

B. THE QUARREL

Why didn't they fly right to God at that time?

Do they complain as before? Yes, but even worse. Before, they asked, who will give us food? And they grumbled. Now they not only grumble, but they threaten and angrily commanded Moses to give them water. Why didn't they learn from the other miracles?

Contended---They demand and insist water. The word quarrel is stronger than grumble. They challenged Moses. Why were they quarreling with Moses?. The answer is that their hearts were still in Egypt. They wanted to go back to the old life, and as a result, they again failed to pass the test. A test can make one better, or it can make one worse and it's the attitude that determines which it will be. If one trusts God and lets Him have His way, the trial will

work for him and not against him. The Israelites looked for a scapegoat, so they blamed Moses as he was an easy target.

Moses' response---Reproves the murmurers Moses reminds the people that a complaint against him is actually a complaint against God. He tried to get the people not to blame him for the situation. They should be taking it up with God. How could Moses give them water? Who did they think he was anyway? Their quarrel really was with the Lord. He asked why they were testing the Lord. He, as the spiritual leader was to help them turn their eyes to the Lord. He wants them to look to God and not to him or their circumstances. All through the wanderings, Moses warned them repeatedly about testing the Lord.

C. COMPLAINING

Thirsted---They refused to listen to Moses. They grumbled.

Hearts were still in Egypt

Worst possible thoughts—They say the same thing they have before in that they say they were brought out there so they would die.

D. FAILING THE TEST

They were so angry and out of control they were ready to kill Moses. When people are mad, they often will do unreasonable things that could only make the situation worse. How was that going to help the situation?

This test was another one they failed and it turned in to a temptation to sin against the Lord.

James 1:12-15

2. THE UNFAILING RESOURCE 17:4-7

A. TURNING TO GOD IN PRAYER

Moses knew how threatening of a situation this was. They wanted to kill him. This was not an exaggeration. This was genuine in what they wanted to do. Moses was at a loss on what to do.

It could be possible that Moses was angry at God, for he speaks of what shall he do with this people. Maybe this was something like Adam when he said "this woman who you gave me".

Moses immediately turns to God in prayer. Moses seems to be at the end of the rope. If men will not listen, God will always listen to our prayers.

Ex 15:25, 32:30-32, Numbers 11:2,11,12:13, 14:13,19

B. GOD'S GRACIOUSNESS MEETS THE NEED

Again, God graciously answers with abundance. He could have had Moses take the rod and summon a plague for their unbelief. He could have punished them severely but God is so patient and merciful.

Psalm 46:1

God's directions to Moses

By these instructions we note that the rock is near Horeb. This Horeb or Sinai, is not far from Rephidim since the people are able to drink the water but still be located in Rephidim where the battle with the Amalekites takes place. Mt. Sinai is getting very close.

Moses was instructed to walk ahead to Horeb with some of the elders and strike a rock with the staff with which he struck the Nile. By this action, the Lord reinforced Moses' position as leader. When he struck

the rock in the sight of the people, they would realize that Moses was chosen by God to do this. God could have just had water come from a fountain or stream right there in the wilderness, but He chose to do this in a miraculous way that he might show His power and make it a miracle of mercy. God showed His power and put honor on Moses as he used the rod on the rock. Yahweh is the Lord of the desert as He was Lord of Egypt. Both were hostile places but they are underneath God's command. This Sinai area is the site of both grace and law.

Moses obeyed and immediately water came out of the rock in great abundance which ran throughout the camp in streams and rivers.

The gushing of the rock—Ps 78:15-16, 105:41, 114:8

Isa 48:21

Matthew Henry said that it is probable that the people dug canals and pools for the receiving of the water, in like manner, as long afterwards passing through the valley of Baca, they made it a well. Ps 84:6, Nu 21:18 Upon God's great providence, even in the greatest difficulties, God can open fountains for our need.

How refreshing this water must have been, so pure, so clear, so pleasurable. However, it means even more in a spiritual way. The spiritual delights are abundant in this story for we have much more to glean here, than just physical water for the physical thirst. It seems that it availed them nothing as far as a spiritual drink, however.

Identity of the Rock 1 Cor 10:4 The Apostle Paul recognized the pure grace that was shown here when he identified the rock as Jesus. Just as God gave water to the people without condition and even in their sin, so He has freely given His Son to us. But Paul went on to say that it is possible to taste that grace, as the Israelites did, and still not persevere in faith .

Identity of the water John 7:37-39 The graces and comforts of the Spirit are compared to rivers of living waters

C. NAMES TO REMEMBER—TESTING AND COMPLAINING

The Israelites had hard hearts that would not submit to the Lord, so they rebelled against His will. The older generation had unbelieving hearts all throughout the journey from Egypt to Canaan. They even complained at the end of the 40 years about water. Numbers 20:1-13

They were an unbelieving generation. Ps 95:6-11, Hebrews 3

We have slogans today such as Remember the Alamo, Remember Pearl Harbor or even remember 911.

We have seen already in Exodus that God sets up memorials for that generation and generations to come so they would not forget what happened at certain places. Mankind has a tendency to forget history.

The manna in the jar was to remind them of God's goodness. This place was to remind them of their lack of trust.

A new name was given to this place, saving the remembrance, not of the mercy of the miracle, but of the sin of the murmuring. This was a memory kept of sin, for the disgrace of the sinners, and for warning of future generations so that they would not commit the sins of the forefathers.

The place was given a double name, Massah/Meribah. It is a place where they charged their human leader with evil motives, Meribah, and a place where they demanded that God prove His care for them, Massah. Meribah means to quarrel. This was to remind them who they argued with. It was like, "remember when you quarreled and argued with the

living God.” This would be unforgettable when they told this story. Massah means testing. They needed to learn that God tests His people in everyday experiences to strengthen their faith and build character. Their faith sure needed to be stronger for they had asked, **”Is the Lord Among us or not?”** That is a case of opened, unrestrained unbelief. This is why Moses wanted the people to remember their horrible sin. John Calvin—“The very name of the place was as much to say that the earth itself cried out, that the people, in their perverse nature, were rebellious, and given to unbelief.” They acted as God had no power to help them.

We have seen three cases in a row of grumbling and complaining and All three occasions are answered by God in a very gracious and merciful way. Israel’s rebellion is both sudden and sustained. Why does God put up with it? He does this because He has the full picture in view. His promises He made to the patriarchs will not be broken, no matter what. We do have to remember that God has just started a relationship with them, so they are like babies. They still need a bigger picture of the holiness of God. That will be seen in the giving of the law which is found in chapter 20.

“So do we see how God’s immeasurable bounty surpasses all the wickedness of man and how, by turning their vices to salvation, He brings light out of darkness...” John Calvin

In our own lives, how many places ought to be named “testing and quarreling?” How often we complain about our circumstances and fail to trust God. It is one thing to sit in church and sing praises and hymns to God such as *All the Way The Savior Leads Me*” and quite something else to be face to face with difficulties beyond our control and humbly say, not my will but Your will be done.

Corrie ten Boom said “Don’t bother to give God instructions, just report for duty.”

We are to live in dependence upon God, even in the greatest difficulties. God can open up fountains for our supply when we least expect them, waters in the wilderness, because He makes a way in the wilderness. We are not to contend and complain, but rely upon the grace of Christ who meets all our needs.